

bility of yellow fever by infection, generated in the manner supposed by the writer, while it altogether fails in establishing its propagation by a strictly contagious principle.

Dr. Strobel has exhibited a feeling of partizanship in the defence of the doctrines he sets forth, and has indulged in expressions towards those who differ from him in opinion, unbecoming in one whose only aim, as he asserts, and which we have no reason to disbelieve, is the discovery of truth, and certainly altogether out of place in a treatise devoted to the discussion of a question purely professional.

The statement quoted by the author from the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales* in relation to the declaration said to have been made by Dr. Rush during his sickness, to the effect that he had advocated the doctrine of non-contagion in yellow fever, without believing in its correctness, is altogether apocryphal, and as it seriously implicates the honesty of one, whose character it should be the pride of every American to sustain, it was unjustifiable in Dr. Strobel to give currency to it unless he had in his possession conclusive evidence of its correctness.

D. F. C.

ART. XV.—*Narrative of the Discoveries of Sir Charles Bell in the Nervous System.*
By ALEXANDER SHAW, Assistant Surgeon to the Middlesex Hospital. 8vo. pp. 232. London: 1839.

THE object of the present work is to exhibit a history of the recent discoveries in the nervous system, together with a view of the general principle on which the late improvements in this department of physiology have been founded; and to show how far we are indebted to different physiologists for propounding and confirming that principle.

We are informed, that the immediate cause which induced Mr. Shaw to enter on this subject, was the appearance, with remarkable frequency, in different publications of general and extensive circulation, of statements, altogether unfounded, and obviously proceeding from one common source, concerning the views originally expressed by Sir Charles Bell as to the functions of certain important parts of the nervous system.

The discoveries in relation to the anatomy and physiology of the spinal nerves, the fifth pair, the portio dura, the glosso-pharyngeal and the spinal accessory nerves, claimed by Sir Charles Bell as being derived from and established by experiments and modes of investigation planned by himself and originally performed by him, or at his instigation, are so well known to all our readers, as to render it unnecessary that we should here particularize them. It appears that recently, the honour of originating these discoveries has been denied to that gentleman and ascribed to M. Magendie and Mr. Mayo.

The attempt to rob Sir Charles Bell of the credit he so justly merits for the important additions made by him to our knowledge of the physiology of the nerves, and which have led the way to other valuable improvements in our views of the structure and functions of the nervous system, is shown in the work before us to have originated with Mr. Mayo, who, in his endeavours to detract from the labours of the former gentleman, and to establish his own claims to the discoveries alluded to, is convicted by Mr. Shaw of very great disingenuousness, of gross contradictions, and not unfrequently of statements without any foundation whatever in truth.

In the interesting history which Mr. Shaw has given of the discoveries of Sir Charles Bell, and of the periods and manner of their promulgation, he has certainly disproved, in the most satisfactory manner, the claim set up by Mr. Mayo for himself and M. Magendie, in relation to the more important of these discoveries, while, at the same time, he has presented a very instructive narrative, which may be consulted with no little profit by the student of physiology.

In an Appendix, the writer has shown that the fact of the retina possessing

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an appropriate sense, distinct from that of a nerve of touch, the establishment of which is formally claimed by M. Magendie, and ascribed to him by Müller, was originally pointed out by Sir Charles Bell, and distinctly referred to in his "Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain," a copy of which was in the possession of M. Magendie, sometime previously to his announcing his discovery of the appropriate sensibility of the retina.

In closing his statements, Mr. Shaw claims the indulgence of his readers, for having occupied them so long with questions which are almost wholly of a personal nature—relating more to who made the discoveries under discussion than to the discoveries themselves.

"But," he remarks, "in begging this indulgence, I cannot refrain from throwing out the following remark for consideration. On occasions of such improvements as those we have been discussing being achieved, the profession generally has a duty to perform. Doubtless, the individual members composing our profession, are under the sacred obligation to exercise their talents, so as to advance the common science in which all are immediately interested to the utmost degree. The profession, I repeat, has a claim upon individuals for these exertions; and to conceal or withhold any improvements which may have been made, whether relating to the administration of the doses of a medicine, or bearing upon questions of higher interest, affecting the general principles on which practice is founded, is a thing universally reprobated. This feeling, amongst men educated liberally, is a just one. But, allowing all this, it is inconsistent with fair dealing for the benefit to be all on one side. For the advantages it receives, the profession is under a bounden engagement, to mete out with justice the only reward it has in its power to confer, upon those members who have zealously and successfully wrought in its behalf; and the responsibility of cherishing and defending the reputations of their members, does not expire when the individuals, who have been thus engaged in its service, are removed by death."

D. F. C.

ART. XVII. *Memoranda for Practitioners in Midwifery.* By EDWARD RIGBY, M. D., &c. First American edition, with additions. By S. C. FOSTER, M. D., Licentiate of the Dublin Lying-in Hospital, &c. 18mo. pp. 63. New-York: 1840.

WE find little in these memoranda which calls for either praise or censure. We confess that, as a general rule, we are opposed to all works of the class to which the present belongs. Too superficial to serve as a proper introduction to the study of the particular subjects of which they treat, and apt to mislead by the few imperfectly detailed facts or instructions they communicate, they are consequently not adapted for the use of the student, who has generally at his command far safer and more competent guides than works like these can prove under any circumstances; while to the practitioner they afford no information, recall to his mind no fact or precept with which he is not expected to be fully conversant, and without a perfect familiarity with which, he is incompetent to the active duties of his profession. It is probable that some may, after committing to memory the obstetric memoranda of Drs. Rigby and Foster, believe themselves fully competent to conduct any case of labour, and it is this very circumstance which gives to works of this kind a somewhat mischievous tendency. For though they will scarcely be consulted by the industrious student, to the idle they may occasionally afford a form of knowledge without its substance, and thus effectually allure him from those sources from whence, alone, the true principles of the obstetric art can be acquired.

D. F. C.